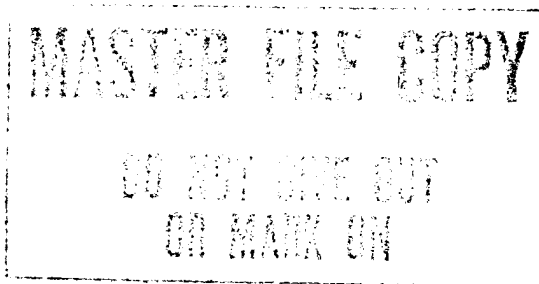




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Near East and South Asia Review



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Supplement
27 February 1987

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NESA NESAR 87-006C

27 February 1987

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262

25X1

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25X1

**Near East and
South Asia Review**

25X1

Supplement

27 February 1987

		<i>Page</i>	
Articles	Israel: Debating Relations With South Africa	1	25X1
			25X1
	Israel's longstanding, strong ties to South Africa have become the subject of an increasingly bitter domestic debate because of heightened US and international condemnation of apartheid and mounting pressure to restrict strategic trade with Pretoria. Most Israeli policymakers advocate a wait-and-see policy.		25X1
	Afghanistan: The War Against the Garrisons	5	25X1
			25X1
	The Afghan resistance has mounted prolonged sieges against some regime garrisons—primarily in eastern Afghanistan—with limited success. The insurgent sieges have seldom caused significant casualties or damage, and relatively few aircraft have been shot down even though most garrisons depend heavily on air resupply.		25X1
			25X1
	<i>Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views.</i>		25X1
			25X1

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NESAR 87-006C

27 February 1987

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Articles

Israel: Debating Relations With South Africa

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Israel's longstanding, strong ties to South Africa have become the subject of an increasingly bitter domestic debate because of heightened US and international condemnation of apartheid and mounting pressure to restrict strategic trade with Pretoria. Some Israelis argue that ties should be cut back now to avoid growing friction with Washington and key West European states. Most Israeli policymakers, however, advocate a wait-and-see policy, arguing that calls for cutting ties to Pretoria are premature.

between the two countries. In late January, Beilin admitted to US Embassy officials that he could not muster the necessary political support to overturn current Israeli policy toward Pretoria. Israeli proponents of close ties to South Africa argue that lucrative economic benefits and concern for the well-being of the Jewish community there militate against a cutback in the relationship.

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Nevertheless, Israeli leaders are acutely sensitive to US concerns and are particularly interested in a US study to be presented to Congress about the international arms trade with South Africa. The Israeli Foreign Ministry is particularly worried that the study will single out Israel as a major sanction violator, and this could lead to growing friction in its relations with Washington.

The US Embassy in Tel Aviv reports that Prime Minister Shamir, Foreign Minister Peres, and Defense Minister Rabin—who was instrumental in establishing the close security links that now exist between Tel Aviv and Pretoria—recently decided to leave relations largely intact. Peres told US officials that Israel was searching for ways to extricate itself from past commitments and other ties. He admitted, however, that change would not be easy to agree upon, and specific actions would be difficult to implement. The recent veto of proposed UN sanctions against South Africa by the United States and the United Kingdom may have bolstered Israel's decision not to take unilateral action soon.

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The Internal Debate

An increasingly bitter debate has emerged within Israel over its policy toward South Africa. Foreign Ministry Director General Yossi Beilin has become the leading advocate of a broad reduction in Israel's ties to Pretoria. Beilin is concerned about the US report and its possibly negative impact on US-Israeli ties. He also argues that Israel has a moral obligation to demonstrate its repugnance to apartheid. He believes Israel should significantly reduce ties now before US pressure forces a major policy shift.

Nevertheless, Shamir, Peres, and Rabin believe Israel should take its cue from the United States and other Western democracies. They probably recognize that mounting US and international pressure against South Africa leaves Tel Aviv no choice but to put distance between itself and Pretoria.

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Longstanding Lucrative Ties

Israeli-South African ties have grown over the past generation to such an extent that they form a complex economic, military, and cultural network. South Africa's 120,000-strong Jewish community, often

Beilin, however, has been unable to garner enough support to implement this strategy—largely because of opposition from Israeli military leaders. Tellingly, he failed to prevent Israel's Tourism Minister Avraham Sharir from traveling to South Africa in early February on a mission to increase tourist links

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NESA NESAR 87-006C

27 February 1987

25X1

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cited by Israeli leaders as the cornerstone of their desire to maintain strong ties to Pretoria, invest heavily—and tax free—in Israel. [REDACTED]

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Defense Minister Rabin probably sees Israel's relationship with South Africa as securing an important market for defense-related products. He forged a strong military assistance relationship with Pretoria shortly after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Israeli sales to South Africa in the mid-1970s were extensive, including patrol boats, missiles, drones, and large quantities of small arms and ammunition. [REDACTED]

But Overall Trade Still Strong

Despite this evidence of decreased interaction, Israeli-South African commercial ties remain strong. Israel continues to import South African coal, aluminum, steel, copper, diamonds, textiles, and agricultural equipment. [REDACTED]

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Perhaps even more important, Israeli assistance and technology have been crucial to South Africa's success in developing and modifying a number of weapon systems. Israeli-supplied technology—unavailable from other sources—enabled South Africa to modernize its fleet of Chieftain tanks and to upgrade its Mirage fighter aircraft. [REDACTED]

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These exports are equally important for Israel. Rapid growth in recent years has forced Israel's defense industries to seek outside markets. The Israel Defense Forces no longer purchase enough goods to keep the defense sector profitable. In addition, the National Unity government's austerity program has provided less money for research and development, causing the defense firms to look elsewhere for funding. Few markets are available to Israeli products—particularly major defense-related items—and states like South Africa, willing to do business with Tel Aviv, are highly valued. South African firms also are ideal partners for joint ventures. They often have better financial backing than their Israeli counterparts, meet Israel's unusually stringent security requirements, and are considered by Israel to be technologically capable. [REDACTED]

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security. Recent reductions in Israeli travel to South Africa and fewer contacts in military trade suggest that Israel has begun implementing both strategies.

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The debate within Israel is likely to continue to be dominated by military-industrial proponents of the relationship, who by far outnumber foreign affairs experts like Beilin who want to reduce ties. Until Tel Aviv's South Africa connection begins to detract from other important Israeli interests—such as relations with the United States and Western Europe or arms sales—Israel is unlikely to change its policies significantly.

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Prospects

Tel Aviv almost certainly will attempt to preserve existing economic and military links by reducing the visibility of these ties and by improving already tight

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Afghanistan: The War Against the Garrisons

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The Afghan resistance has mounted prolonged sieges against some regime garrisons—primarily in eastern Afghanistan—with limited success. The garrisons range in size from several hundred to 3,000 troops, have fortified artillery and infantry positions, and are protected by extensive minefields. Typically, resistance forces—numbering between 500 and 2,000 insurgents—attempt to isolate the post from ground and aerial resupply. The insurgents mount artillery and mortar attacks, with occasional assaults against isolated outposts. The insurgent sieges have seldom caused significant casualties or damage, and relatively few aircraft have been shot down even though most garrisons depend heavily on air resupply.

Barikowt: A Typical Insurgent Siege

The nearly three-year-old blockade of the regime garrison at Barikowt in Konarha Province is typical of a prolonged insurgent siege. The 55th Infantry Regiment—with about 500 troops—subordinate to the 9th Infantry Division is garrisoned at Barikowt in the deep, narrow Konar Valley near the Pakistani border. The garrison was established in the early 1980s, probably to block insurgent infiltration routes from Pakistan. Insurgents—mostly from the Hezbi-Islami (Gulbuddin) group—quickly surrounded the post, pressure on Barikowt has prompted periodic strenuous Soviet and regime efforts to prevent the garrison's destruction. Because the insurgent siege has effectively cut off roads leading to the post, the regiment almost always is supplied by air. In the spring of 1985 a multiregimental Soviet and regime force swept up the Konar Valley and briefly lifted the siege, but the post was again cut off as soon as these forces withdrew.

Pluses and Minuses

In our view, the siege of Barikowt points up the advantages and disadvantages to the resistance of such tactics. On the plus side, the resistance has kept the garrison bottled up and prevented it from blocking insurgent supply lines. Kabul, which clearly wants to keep the garrison open if only to avoid the humiliation of a retreat, is forced to devote considerable resources to resupply and reinforce the post.

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To maintain the siege, the resistance uses significant amounts of manpower that might be employed more productively in other areas or in activities such as convoy attacks. In addition, substantial amounts of ammunition are consumed in attacks that probably cause few casualties or damage.

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A more aggressive prosecution of sieges involving direct attacks aimed at capturing large posts would provide political and military payoffs for the insurgents, but serious risks are involved. Capture of a major regime post such as Barikowt or Khowst would be a major boost to insurgent morale and would provide a significant public relations victory. Direct attacks on the garrisons, however, would probably result in high casualties because of the extensive minefields and superior firepower of regime garrisons. Even if the guerrillas could seize a garrison, we believe—and there is considerable evidence that resistance military leaders share this view—that any attempt to hold the captured post would be a serious mistake, allowing the Soviets to use their control of the air to maximize their firepower advantage and cause high insurgent casualties.

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Masood's Approach

Insurgent leader Masood's assault on the Farkhar garrison last August involved a much more thorough approach and was carried out rapidly. Before the assault, resistance forces performed reconnaissance and intelligence missions to

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27 February 1987

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Resistance-Surrounded Garrisons

[redacted] the following regime garrisons are surrounded by the resistance:

- The 55th Infantry Regiment at **Barikowt** in Konarha Province, manned by several hundred regime troops, has been under heavy insurgent pressure for three years. We believe it depends totally on aerial resupply.
- The 25th Infantry Division at **Khowst** in Paktia Province numbers from 3,500 to 7,000 troops and also depends totally on aerial resupply. This unit is frequently under insurgent attack.
- Several regime units in northern Paktia Province are under constant pressure and depend mostly on aerial resupply, although some truck convoys have succeeded in reaching them. These units are the 8th Border Brigade at **Hesarke Pain**, with approximately 250 to 500 men, and the **Ali Kheyl** garrison, containing two infantry regiments of the 12th Infantry Division from Gardeyz, with a combined strength of about 750 to 1,000 troops.

[redacted]

Insurgent forces frequently initiate harassing artillery and mortar attacks against several Soviet and regime garrisons in the Panjsher Valley that also depend to some extent on aerial resupply. These garrisons are not under constant pressure. They include:

- Regime Infantry Regiment at **Peshghowr**.
- Regime Infantry Unit at **Tahana**.
- Regime Infantry Regiment at **Barak**.
- Afghan Infantry Regiment at **Bazarak**.
- Soviet Motorized Rifle Regiment at **Rokha**.

There are two isolated regime/Soviet garrison areas in the Hazarehjat area that, [redacted] appear to be surrounded and under occasional insurgent pressure. They are:

- **Chakhcharan Airfield** in Ghowr Province, which houses a reinforced motorized rifle battalion and a battalion-size regime unit.
- **Bamian Airfield** in Bamian Province, which contains two Soviet airborne companies and a regime regiment. [redacted]

identify the garrison's minefields and weak points. Detailed planning preceded the operation, and the insurgents received careful training. The garrison was overrun in a few days. Insurgent forces quickly abandoned the post after capturing large amounts of military equipment and supplies. The speed of the nighttime assault, the absence of Soviet advisers at Farkhar, and the inflexible regime command and control structure prevented air support from aiding the garrison [redacted]

Impact of Air Defense Weapons

We believe the air defense equipment now used by insurgents around major besieged garrisons makes resupply difficult but not impossible. Despite extensive air defense around Barikowt, including several Oerlikon guns, and terrain favoring the guerrilla gunners, the insurgents could not choke off the garrison or down significant numbers of aircraft.

[redacted]

The acquisition of improved air defense equipment—especially advanced surface-to-air missiles—by insurgents engaged in a siege would enable them to tighten their grip on regime garrisons and make resupply efforts more costly. Sophisticated surface-to-air missiles enable the resistance to retain its mobility and give it the capability to engage aircraft. [redacted]

[redacted] the resistance has used its newly acquired Stingers primarily around major airfields and air corridors. We have no evidence that Stinger missiles are being used around major besieged posts like Barikowt or Khowst. [redacted]

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Outlook

Insurgent successes against Farkhar and Nahrin as well as numerous recent successful assaults against battalion-size regime posts in Nangarhar, Paktia, and Qandahar Provinces suggest that parts of the resistance may be moving away from prolonged sieges toward attacks aimed at quickly overrunning smaller posts, seizing equipment, and withdrawing. These efforts offer the highest payoff for the guerrillas, in our view, enabling them most easily to demonstrate the weaknesses of Kabul's army, replenish their stocks with captured equipment, reduce regime threats to insurgent base camps and supply routes, and boost resistance morale.

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Insurgent forces have successfully assaulted regime border battalions—which usually number 100 to 250 men—at posts in Nangarhar and Qandahar Provinces, and there are numerous similar targets throughout northern Afghanistan, especially in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces. Most of these posts are isolated in mountainous terrain, at least partly dependent on aerial resupply, and vulnerable to insurgent pressure. These units include the border battalions located throughout the eastern, southern, and western borders as well as several regime garrisons in Badakhshan Province.

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